WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

    generating a first unique identifier (UID);

    transmitting to a previously known address, via an electronic mail protocol, a first message comprising the first UID;

    receiving, via the electronic mail protocol, a second message comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID; and

    transmitting to the previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a third message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first message further comprises the digital object.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the third message further comprises the digital object.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the second message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic mail protocol comprises a mail server operating the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP).

7. The method of claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the electronic mail protocol operates securely using the Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the first UID contains at least 128 bits.

9. A method for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

    receiving, via an electronic mail protocol, a first message comprising a first unique identifier (UID);

    generating a second UID;

transmitting to a previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a second message comprising the second UID and a copy of the first UID; and

receiving, via the electronic mail protocol, a third message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages received further comprises the digital object.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the first message further comprises the digital object.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the third message further comprises the digital object.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the second electronic mail message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

14. The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic mail protocol comprises a mail server operating the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP).

15. The method of claim 9 wherein at least a portion of the electronic mail protocol operates securely using the Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol.

16. The method of claim 9 wherein the first UID contains at least 128 bits.

17. A computer-readable medium including computer-executable instructions facilitating authenticating a sender of a digital object, computer-executable instructions executing the steps of:

generating a first unique identifier (UID);

transmitting to a previously known address, via an electronic mail protocol, a first message comprising the first UID;

receiving, via the electronic mail protocol, a second message comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID; and

transmitting to the previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a third message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim 17 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the second message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

20. An apparatus for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

a random number generator generating a first unique identifier (UID);

a network interface transmitting to a previously known address, via an electronic mail protocol, a first message comprising the first UID;

the network interface receiving, via the electronic mail protocol, a second message comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID; and

the network interface transmitting to the previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a third message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.